

TEN CRICKET  
South Africa v West Indies  
Third Test Day 3  
Live from 2:30pm

STAR SPORTS 1  
FA Cup  
Man City v Wednesday  
Live from 9:00pm

STAR SPORTS 2  
La Liga  
Valencia v Real Madrid

Live from 10:00pm  
Espanyol v Eibar  
Live from 12:00am (Monday)  
Sociedad v Barcelona  
Live from 2:00am (Monday)

STAR SPORTS 4  
FA Cup  
Dover v Crystal Palace  
Live from 7:00pm

DAY'S EVENT Dhaka Premier League Venue: SBNCS KSOAS Venue: BKSP-3  
Abahani v Prime Bank Kalabagan v Legends Prime Doleshwar v MSC Time: 10:00am

## Gerrard going to MLS

**REUTERS, London**

Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard will join a Major League Soccer team in the United States when he leaves Anfield at the end of the season, the former England captain told the English club's TV channel on Saturday.

Gerrard announced on Friday that he was leaving the Premier League club he has played for throughout his career and moving to a foreign team.

The 34-year-old has made 695 appearance and scored 180 goals for Liverpool after joining the club as an eight-year-old schoolboy.

His former England team mate Frank Lampard left Chelsea last year to join New York City FC but he was loaned back to their Premier League rivals Manchester City and this week confirmed he would stay at the Etihad Stadium until the end of the season.

Gerrard's greatest moment in a Liverpool shirt was when he helped to inspire their dramatic comeback win over AC Milan in the Champions League final in 2005.

However, he suffered disappointment last May when Liverpool missed out on the Premier League title.

Gerrard played 114 times for England before retiring.

# Anyone up for Emily's baton? PSG duo risk punishment

**ATIQUÉ ANAM**

Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin, during a press conference recently, rued Bangladesh's failure to produced decent enough strikers in recent years.

"I am sorry to say this but I have been seeing the same faces playing for the national team year after year. For instance, (Zahid Hasan) Emily has been playing for so long and we haven't been able to find a replacement for him," the BFF boss had said while speaking to the national team in front of the media.

The BFF boss's words may sound crude, may even sound naive to some extent; but it is hard to refute the statement.

Every coach who has worked with the Bangladesh national team since 2005 -- that is when the star striker made his International debut -- turned to Emily when picking the national squad. And ten years since, Emily remains the go-to man in the frontline for Bangladesh.

What makes Emily such an indispensable part of the team? Is it because of his sheer quality or the lack of it among the others?

National team's current coach Saiful Bari Titu, who has coached Emily both at club level and in the national team, thinks the reason is a bit of both, and maybe more.

"Emily is a complete striker, a rarity in our current national set-up at the moment. He can play both as a classical centre-forward as well as



in playmaking role, which makes him the obvious first choice," opined the veteran coach.

But there are those who believe that at 28 years of age, Emily neither has the pace nor the physical strength to keep opposition defenders on their toes, reducing him to a mere goal-mouth poacher. This line of thinking gathers more steam from time to time, especially after the veteran forward puts in a non-

chalant performance for the Red and Greens, like he did during Bangladesh's 0-3 defeat against Japan U-21s last month. But the fact that, in the last decade, Emily has scored goals in all the calendar years bar one, speaks volumes of his consistency.

Another major criticism about Emily is that most of his recent goals for the national team have come either from the penalty spot or from

headers. Titu believes that despite his obvious shortcomings, the consistency with which Emily operates and his role in creating goals apart from scoring is what makes him a favourable option for coaches.

"You see, for quite a short man (5'8"). Emily is very good in the air because he can sustain the jump for quite a while. Apart from that, even when he is not scoring, Emily can play a key role in creating goals for the team," Titu opined.

In the last three years, a host of young forwards like Wahed Ahmed, Shakhawat Rony, Toklish Ahmed, Aminur Rahman Sajib have burst into the scene. While they have raised the bars of hope with their initial impressions, none of them have been able to sustain that impression with consistent performances, either at club level or with the national team.

Maruful Haque, another widely respected coach of the country, points to a couple of reasons as to why the others have not quite stood up to be counted.

"The main reason is the lack of opportunities for the local strikers, due to the preference of African forwards by the Premier League Clubs. The other reason is, I think, the incomplete learning process that these players go through while playing in the lower tiers. I don't see anyone else at the moment quite like Emily," Maruful says.

As the new year dawns with a busy schedule for the Bangladesh national team, the possibility of anyone overtaking the mantle of the number-one striker of the national team still seems a far-fetched one.

## PSG duo risk punishment

**AFP, Paris**

South American attacking duo Ezequiel Lavezzi and Edinson Cavani finally returned to their club Paris Saint-Germain on Friday, but both face possible sanctions after missing a training camp.

Having vowed to bolster team discipline, coach Laurent Blanc has said he will be demanding "explanations" from the pair, who have both been linked with moves away from the French capital during the January transfer window.

They were notable absentees from a winter training camp in Morocco which culminated in a 1-0 friendly win over Inter Milan on Tuesday and neither player appeared at Friday morning's first training session of the new year at the club's base in the Paris suburbs.

They both only arrived back at Paris' Charles de Gaulle airport on a flight from Buenos Aires at the same time as the training session started at 1000 GMT.

Argentine Lavezzi finally arrived at the PSG training ground in his Ferrari four hours later, while Uruguayan Cavani followed about 10 minutes after that.

After the pair had failed to show up in Morocco, Blanc said he would want "some explanation" from Cavani and Lavezzi.

Blanc refused to be drawn on a possible transfer of either player, however.

"We can't say that today. We're going to wait until they arrive," he said. "We'll expect some explanation, and then we'll make sporting decisions as a club."

Blanc said just before France's winter break that Cavani lacked "confidence" and was going through a "difficult" time.

Arsenal have been linked with a move for the forward, although he would probably cost at least 50 million euros (£39m, \$60m).

Inter Milan coach Roberto Mancini, meanwhile, has denied any contact with Lavezzi.

Blanc on Sunday vowed to toughen "discipline" within the squad with PSG sitting in third place in Ligue 1, behind Lyon and leaders Marseille, at the season's halfway stage.

"There are certainly some little things that will change, some privileges that will disappear," he said.

## Real face Valencia test

**AFP, Madrid**

La Liga leaders Real Madrid face one of their toughest tests since embarking on a 22-game winning streak back in September when they start 2015 with a trip to Valencia on Sunday.

Los Che have reason to be optimistic in the new year with a return to Champions League football for next season top of their agenda.

Valencia sit fourth, a solitary point above Sevilla, Villarreal and Malaga, but demonstrated their financial advantage over the other Champions League hopefuls following Singaporean businessman Peter Lim's recent acquisition of the club by splashing out 25 million euros (£19.4 million, \$30 million) on Argentine international midfielder Enzo Perez this week.

"I have the greatest expectations of making a good start here," Perez said as he was presented to the Valencia fans on Friday.

"I hope that this new project at Valencia grows, and that 2015 will be a happy year for us all."

Perez is expected to make his Mestalla debut against a Real side still shorn of Luka Modric through injury.

Sergio Ramos is also a serious doubt having played with a calf injury as the European champions ended 2014 by collecting their fourth trophy of the year in the Club World Cup against San Lorenzo a fortnight ago.

Unusually the opening of the transfer window has sparked rumours of possible departures from the Santiago Bernabeu rather than big money signings with Gareth Bale linked with a move to Manchester United.

However, the Welshman, who scored in his third final for Los Blancos with his 11th of the season in the Club World Cup final, has dismissed suggestions that he could leave the Spanish capital after a remarkably successful 18 months since joining from Tottenham Hotspur.

"It has been a fantastic year for me. I wanted to come to Real Madrid to win titles and work alongside the best players and that is exactly what I have done in a single year," he told the club's website.

**FIXTURES**

(all times GMT)

**Sunday**  
Getafe v Rayo Vallecano (1100), Valencia v Real Madrid (1600), Espanyol v Eibar (1800), Real Sociedad v Barcelona (2000)

**Monday**

"Hopefully we can keep improving, keep winning titles and I can keep showing my best."

Barcelona start the year just a point adrift of Real at the top, but having played a game more.

The Catalans also face a potentially tricky trip away to David Moyes's Real Sociedad on Sunday and have had little time to prepare for the game as a group following the Christmas break.

Lionel Messi, Neymar and Dani Alves only returned to training on Friday, while the latter remains a doubt due to a hamstring injury.

"Every game now is a chance to cut the gap," said Barca goalkeeper Claudio Bravo, who will be facing the club he played with for eight years before joining Barca in June.

"It depends on us playing well and, sooner or later, our rivals will drop points."

Moyes, meanwhile, has urged his players to summon the spirit and performance levels which saw them defeat Real and Atletico Madrid at home this season before his appointment.

"We respect Barcelona because they are a very good team, but they are coming to San Sebastian and we have to show them this is not an easy place to come and win," said the Scot.

"My players have already shown that they are capable of beating Barcelona."

## Huth sorry for explicit tweets

**AFP, London**

Stoke defender Robert Huth is being investigated by the Football Association after apologising for a series of explicit interactions he made on Twitter.

Huth has landed himself in hot water after responding to a Twitter account which posts sexual images of individuals.

The account invites users of the social media site to guess from cropped photographs of people in explicit poses whether those pictured have male or female genitalia.

A series of tweets posted from Huth's official account showed the 30-year-old German playing the game.

On Friday, with the interactions with the other account having been deleted, he posted a message saying: "Clearly no offence was meant or directed to anyone, but apologies if I've offended anyone."

But that may not be enough for the former Chelsea defender to avoid FA punishment.

## Alan makes Palace coup

**AFP, London**

Alan Pardew on Saturday was confirmed as Crystal Palace's new manager after being released from his contract at Newcastle United.

A statement on Palace's official website read: "Crystal Palace Football Club is pleased to announce the appointment of Alan Pardew as the club's new manager after signing a three-and-a-half-year contract."

Pardew spent four years in charge of Newcastle, but he was never a favourite with many of the Tyneside club's fans and eventually jumped at the chance of returning to Palace, where he spent four years as a player.

The 53-year-old replaces Neil Warnock, who was sacked last Saturday, four months into his second spell in charge, with Palace third from bottom of the English Premier League and facing a battle against relegation.

Pardew, then a blond-haired midfield player, played for Palace between 1987 and 1991, notably scoring the winning goal in a 4-3 victory over Liverpool in the 1990 FA Cup semi-finals.

"I am absolutely delighted to be the new manager of Crystal Palace," said Pardew, who becomes Palace's fourth permanent manager in less than 18 months.

"Everyone knows my history here. What's important now is to move the club to the next level.

"I believe with the backing of Steve (Parish) and the board I can help achieve that and create some new exciting history for the club."

Palace chairman Parish said: "We wanted a manager with a great track record and proven experience in the Barclays Premier League.

"In Alan we have both these things as

well as a man who has great affection for this club and shares my determination to take us to the next level."

Warnock, 66, returned to Palace following Tony Pulis's departure on the eve of the campaign, but was sacked after only six months.

Pulis was named the Premier League's Manager of the Year for steering Palace clear of relegation last season, but left in August after falling out with the club's hierarchy over transfer policy.

He was appointed manager of West Bromwich Albion earlier this week.

Newcastle, currently 10th in the Premier League table, were the first to announce Pardew's departure in a statement that read: "Newcastle United can confirm that Alan Pardew has been released from his contract in order to be installed as the new manager of Crystal Palace."

Assistant coach John Carver and first-team coach Steve Stone were due to take charge of Newcastle for their FA Cup third-round game at Leicester City later on Saturday.

Newcastle added: "The search for a head coach has begun and an announcement will follow in due course."

Reflecting on his time at St James' Park, during which Newcastle finished 12th, fifth, 16th and 10th in the Premier League, Pardew said: "It's been a privilege to manage Newcastle United.

"I want to thank my captain, Fabricio Colocini, and all the players, John Carver, Steve Stone, (goalkeeping coach) Andy Woodman and all the staff, all of whom have been outstanding servants to Newcastle United.

"A special thanks also goes to the fans for all their support over the last four years. I must also thank (owner) Mike Ashley and the board for their unwavering support during my tenure at the club."

## Podolski lands at Inter

**AFP, Milan**

German World Cup winner Lukas Podolski arrived in Milan on Friday where he was poised to sign a loan deal with Inter after being frozen out by Arsenal.

The 29-year-old has become increasingly frustrated at his lack of playing time with the English Premier League side.

Podolski was pictured on the Inter website brandishing a blue and black club scarf on his arrival in the Italian city.

His move to Italy comes despite Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger on Tuesday describing Inter's interest as "a joke".

Podolski, who moved to Arsenal from Cologne in 2012, is due to undergo a medical on Saturday and could make his debut against champions Juventus on Tuesday.

He has scored 31 goals for the Gunners but has yet to start a Premier League match this season.

Reports on the morning of Thursday's game at Southampton, which Arsenal lost 2-0, claimed Podolski had stormed out of training session in frustration at being repeatedly omitted from Wenger's starting line-up.

The Germany international took to social media to deny a bust-up and Wenger insisted Podolski was absent from his squad because of a groin injury.

But Wenger did admit the player could be allowed to leave for Inter if the Serie A club improved on their first offer for the player.

## Taylor blow for Magpies

**AFP, London**

Newcastle defender Steven Taylor confirmed on Friday that he will miss the rest of the season with a ruptured Achilles tendon.

Taylor sustained the injury during his side's 3-3 draw with Burnley at St James' Park in the Premier League on Thursday.

The Magpies' caretaker manager John Carver said after the match that he didn't expect Taylor to play again this term and 28-year-old centre-back used his official personal account on social media website Sportloster to say: "Gutted to say I'm going to be out for the season.

"I ruptured my Achilles in the last game. Thankfully it wasn't the one I did a few years ago.

"I'll have an operation on it on Wednesday, but won't make it back now for the rest of this season."

## Schumacher making slow recovery

**MAIL ONLINE**

Michael Schumacher has started to recognise family members, according to someone claiming to be a family friend.

Philippe Streiff, a former Formula One driver, told French media Schumacher "has yet to recover the power of speech" but is "nevertheless starting to recognise those close to him".

Schumacher suffered severe head injuries in a ski accident in Meribel in the French Alps a year ago on Monday.

The former Formula One ace emerged from an induced coma in June, and left hospital in September.

In an interview with Le Parisien, Streiff said he had learned of Schumacher's progress from his wife, Corinna, and surgeon, Gerard Saillant. Streiff said Schumacher had 'very limited' movement but was working on sitting upright, and that 'long term...he could hope one day to walk with crutches.'

However, Schumacher's manager has disputed the comments, saying the 45-year-old faces a 'long fight' for recovery and that Streiff is not a family friend. 'We need a long time,' Sabine Kehm said. 'He is making progress appropriate to the severity of the situation.'

